

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2006

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:00 P.M.

PUBLIC WORK SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

MINUTES

A public work session of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date in the William A. Briggs Building in the Reed Conference Room with the following members present: Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante. Mr. Archetto and Mr. Palumbo were absent. Also attending were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Votto, Mr. Balducci, and Mrs. Lundsten.

The work session was called to order at 6:10 p.m.

The roll was taken.

Mr. Lupino noted that Mr. Palumbo was excused from this work session.

Mr. Lupino stated that the agenda would be taken out of order. Executive Session would be held after the public work session.

Mr. Scherza asked the committee if they would consider changing the December 13, 2006 public work session to December 6, 2006. The School Committee and school administration have been asked to meet with the City Council on December 12th regarding the Omnibus meeting. It is a required meeting on state fiscal projections. By changing the date for the meeting to December 6th, the committee and administration could meet on that date to prepare for the Omnibus meeting on December 12th. The School Committee consented to change the date to December 6th for the work session. Mr. Lupino requested that the Cranston Herald and Providence Journal be notified.

1. Middle School Reform Report

Mrs. Donna Vigneau presented the second report to the School Committee regarding the progress of the Middle School Reform Committee. A copy of this report is attached for the record.

Mrs. Vigneau commented that a report was made to the committee one month ago by Mr. Laliberte and Mr. Morrell. Since that time, not a whole lot has happened. She communicated to the committee that the Middle School Reform Committee wishes to present to the School Committee on a monthly basis. This committee has been meeting for the better part of one year, and they are coming to the crunch point when they will be coming first to the Superintendent, Executive Committee and Cranston

Teachers' Alliance with some recommendations as a result of this year's work. That will take place by the end of December. They wanted to keep the School Committee up to date with the work they have been doing so that when they come forward in January with some recommendations on middle school issues, it won't come as a big surprise. In this way, the committee has been connected with the work the Middle School Reform Committee has been doing right along.

Mr. Scherza pointed out that this committee came out of collective bargaining negotiations with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance to come up with recommendations jointly to the CTA and to the School Committee.

Mrs. Vigneau added that there are twelve people on the committee, six representing the administrative staff and six representing the Cranston Teachers' Alliance. In addition, there are some ex officio members who have been invited in and who asked to be included as part of their discussion. It has been a very open process and one that is very positive. Mrs. Vigneau updated the committee on the progress to date. This information is included in the attached report. She added that Breaking Ranks in the Middle was purchased for every teacher in the middle schools. Faculty meetings have been

directed toward the reading of the text, understanding it, planning, school improvement planning around the nine strategies. That work is ongoing and is expected to continue.

With regard to the job descriptions for both team leaders and curriculum coordinators, there are still some department chairs at the middle school level. This is one of the pieces this committee has spent a lot of time wrestling with. They are trying to determine what makes sense and what is best practice for a leadership structure at the middle level to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This committee has drafted draft copies of a team leader job description and a curriculum coordinator job description at the middle level. They are trying to get a meeting with the powers that be to run them by them to get feedback and bring them forward to the School Committee as part of their recommendations in January. The work of those two positions in the middle school are pivotal to moving instruction forward, and they are not old wine in a new bottle. They are substantial leadership positions at the middle level.

Mrs. Vigneau went on to say that the advisories are moving along and could safely report that all three middle schools have put it on the line that they will be ready to implement an advisory program. This is a planning year this year, and all three middle schools have been working diligently on this. Currently there are thirty teachers enrolled in courses being held at Bain. There are teachers from each of the three middle schools there. They want some more in-depth courses

next semester so teachers will be taking courses at Western Hills, and it is open to teachers from all three middle schools.

Page 3 November 15, 2006

Mr. Lupino asked Mrs. Vigneau to define advisory the way it is meant in this particular instance because he thought it was different from what he originally felt advisory to mean. He asked if these teachers were going to advise other teachers or if they were going to advise students. Mrs. Vigneau responded that they were going to advise students. It would be a group of students that meet somewhat regularly, and they have not defined exactly what that means. It could be different at each of the three middle schools depending upon the needs of those schools. Advisory means a dozen or so students meeting regularly with one adult. It doesn't necessarily have to mean a student's teacher; it is one adult in the building. She was a building principal, and she had an advisee. She had twelve students that she met with three times a week. She would check in with those students, and she was responsible overall to make sure that they were being successful in a middle school environment. At the high school level, there is more latitude of how advisory time can be defined. She knows that the middle school regulations are requiring that middle level students be assigned an adult who meets with them regularly around issues of academic success, social, emotional and developmental success at that level.

Mr. Lupino stated that these courses will take place in a PDI atmosphere. It is not a college course the teachers will attend where they will be able to get credits for attending the classes. Mr. Lupino asked if this would change the district's definition of guidance at all and also if it infringed upon what the Department of Education says about a guidance person with a certain amount of credentials. Mrs. Vigneau responded that in some ways what they hope happens in advisory is that it will allow counselors to do the work that they are intended to do. When she was an advisor/counselor and she had her twelve students, if there were issues that she did not feel credentialed or qualified to respond to, she wanted to bring it to the attention of a counselor. An advisory is an attempt to have a small personalized setting with students around how to be successful at the middle level. There are issues that she wouldn't want to touch as an advisor, and that is when she would call upon the qualifications of another person. Generally there is a very articulated curriculum that follows with an advisor. It is not a free for all to simply chat. It is a clearly defined program where the students would set academic goals for the year and how they would be successful for the year. It very much aligns with the new counseling standards and expectations. Mrs. Jean Greco serves as ex officio on this committee and is very much at the table in supporting the advancement of advisory.

Mrs. Vigneau further explained that this committee is beginning to look at the schedule as it is now at the middle schools and are asking

if it is the best delivery model for high level intensive learning for middle level students. It is pretty much lock step and regimented. This committee is doing a lot of work investigating what high quality schedules look like and what makes sense for structure for students. This can be a different piece to wrestle through because people are comfortable with what they have been doing. The committee has to look at the recommendations from Breaking Ranks

Page 4 November 15, 2006

in the Middle and in other places. For the most part, they recommend more flexible block scheduling where instruction will drive the time rather than the forty-seven minutes. She has no sense of what direction this will take. She hopes that by December this committee will come to the School Committee with recommendations that will significantly meet the needs of the students at the middle level.

With regard to the time frame, there is no question that this committee will be coming in with some final recommendation on leadership, organization for learning structures and personalization by the end of the year and that the group that was sanctioned to do this work will be disbanded as of the end of that work because they will have accomplished their mission. It is an ad hoc committee that came together to do this work, but one of the recommendations they will make is that a second wave of this needs to be reformed by way of how it will impact curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Mr. Traficante stated that he knows that the Department of Education is working on secondary reform for middle schools. He asked when RIDE plans on coming out with their package. Mrs. Vigneau responded that they are planning on coming out with it in January. A public hearing was held, and not one change was made at the public hearing in the language of the draft recommendations. As they were promulgated, they will probably be adopted in January. Mr. Traficante asked if any of the recommendations made were in sync with the secondary reform for middle school or in conflict. Mrs. Vigneau commented that they were totally aligned.

Mr. Scherza stated that it was testimony to the committee that the district started something two years before it was mandated to do it. This district is ahead of the curve and should hit the ground running. Anything that needs to be changed for next year can be built into the budget process. When a district has to plan at the last minute, it is unanticipated and becomes a budget killer.

Ms. Iannazzi asked how the actual scheduling process is taking place and if they were calling other school districts to see what they have. In addition, she asked if they were contacting Bay View, LaSalle, and Hendricken to see what they have in their programs. Mrs. Vigneau responded that it is a very interesting format. The first session was a brainstorming session where people could bring their own ideas about scheduling, and no one was allowed to refute another person's

ideas. They were based on research and other middle schools nationally. There are no private middle schools, and they have a very small component. They have been looking at models all over the country and in the state around scheduling. Within Cranston, the schedules are somewhat the same. Western Hills hasn't had bells for quite some time so there are inconsistencies at their own table. It has been a very interesting and reflective process to date. Mr. Scherza added that every member of the Reform Committee has visited other schools that have good practices. Mrs. Vigneau commented that the committee did that last year, and Mr. Scherza was a little impatient with their lack of progress and wanted them

Page 5 November 15, 2006

to move faster and quicker. The people working together at the table had never worked together before. They began by visiting the Cranston middle schools spending one day at each school. They then visited other middle schools in the state that had effective practices for scheduling, etc. They spent a lot of time last year learning about each other and learning how to work together. This year they have put pencil to paper in trying to structure something that makes sense. It is hard because this is a big change.

Mr. Lupino referred to the schools in Rhode Island that have not adopted a middle school concept and asked if they would be excluded from this new reform, and Mr. Scherza responded that they

are not excluded. This was voted on and promulgated by the Board of Regents which is the master school committee for the state. Mr. Lupino commented that school districts will be forced to adopt a middle school concept whether they want to or not. Mrs. Vigneau added that there are many districts in Rhode Island that changed the name from junior high to middle school but did not change one thing about their practice. Some of the schools that still maintain the name junior high really do have effective good practice going on in their schools. A name does not necessarily suggest they have a program.

Mr. Lupino asked if any of the current committee members were interested in continuing with this project. Mrs. Vigneau said that she would be surprised if they don't want to keep a hand in this project. The people who have come together really enjoy it. What is missing is that they have not discussed curriculum, instruction and assessment which are critically important issues. The group needs to be expanded to include more people. She, for one, would like to continue.

Mr. Scherza remarked that the reason for the December time line that was imposed was so that it could be put into the budget process in the event there are plans that will be agreed to. This is going to be ongoing; it is not a finite piece.

Mr. Stycos asked why the Breaking Ranks in the Middle plan was

chosen. In response, Mrs. Vigneau said that there aren't that many plans. There have been only two foundational pieces for middle schools. One came out in 1990 which was called Turning Points, and it was revised in 2000. Breaking Ranks in the Middle took the best of Turning Points, and it also took the national forum on middle schools and tied them in together. There are national middle school associations, but there hasn't been much written or done. Breaking Ranks in the Middle is one of the most recent and is a compilation of Turning Points and national forum. In addition, this is the document that comes from the National Middle School Association. They are in sync with one another and are not opposing one another. Mrs. Lundsten added that the regulations that will be coming out in January are in sync with this text. Mrs. Vigneau commented further that when the Regents looked at middle level regulations they had this document by their side. It is considered the foremost reform document on the middle school level just as Breaking Ranks at the High School Level.

Page 6 November 15, 2006

Mr. Scherza pointed out that the regulations from the Regents are largely what will be found in Breaking Ranks in the Middle. As far as high school reform, the districts will be saddled with more and more mandates, and there is always a cost to everything. Arguably, a district can have a good high school, but they can't have a great high school unless they have a good middle school. By doing a good job

with this, the high school reform will be much more effective if the students are to receive a much better ground at the middle level. He added that he referred to the middle schools as “the black hole” in the district because they have neglected to put that support into it. The district has to do a much better job at the middle level to make it much easier and more efficient to deal with the high school issues. He also pointed out that this committee, unlike most committees, is not something that meets once a month and then they go their own ways. These people have given up a day a week out of their summer and have stayed late after school. The people at that table have been legitimately committed to it. Mrs. Vigneau commented that they meet every week or every other week.

Mr. Stycos asked if the committee discussed the Personal Learning Plan, alternatives to tracking and ability group, and parental involvement. Mrs. Vigneau responded that the Personal Learning Plan is a No Child Left Behind Act recommendation where every child K through 12 has to have a Personal Learning Plan. The middle schools are no different than the other levels of schools where it is recommended that every child have a personal plan. The committee has not addressed it specifically. Their attempts have been more at personalizing the environment and helping students be more successful. In terms of looking at structures, she felt that one could not talk about structures and schedules without dealing with the tracking and ability issue because it goes hand in hand. It is equity and access for all students where all students will have access to the

curriculum. She didn't feel that this committee would have it complete by the end of December in terms of their recommendations. It is unavoidable that they have to talk about the fact that all students have access to a full and rich curriculum. By the end of December, she felt that the committee would get to a recommendation for a revised type of scheduling process, but the next step around curriculum, instruction, and assessment can't take place without fundamentally addressing who is going to get which curriculum at the middle level. What kinds of levels are they going to have for the students? Parent engagement has not been a piece of what they have been working on. Their charge this year was to look at a leadership structure in the middle school, personalization, and scheduling structure. Those were their three charges for this round. One of the pieces they are discussing is the use of common planning time. They are trying to determine if they should use common planning time to meet with parents and if it makes sense instructionally. They are trying to determine if they will get their best bang for their buck by having a parent conference during that time when they are supposed to be talking about teaching and instruction. The contract is pretty specific about when teachers can and cannot meet with family. Again, it has surfaced as to what the district's responsibility is in the role of parent engagement and when they meet with family. All of this surfaces as part of the conversation.

Mr. Scherza commented that the whole process is analogous to what the city would go through in an economic development project. The district has to deal with and build the infrastructure to create the capacity to do it. They can't put the roof on before building a foundation. Right now they are dealing with the nuts and bolts of what came out of things that would affect collective bargaining, and they would have to go into a contract that would create capacity.

Mr. Lupino noted that from a personal standpoint he knows the nightmare of the bureaucracy, and he knows what goes into the Personal Lesson Plans on an elementary level. He couldn't fathom how long it would take to do just the data entry portion on Personal Lesson Plans for the middle school. Mrs. Vigneau remarked that there are Personal Lesson Plans for the middle school. Mr. Scherza added that it is very labor intensive, and budgetarily labor is the majority of the district's thrust. Mrs. Vigneau added that there is so much more work that can be done with families in terms of good middle level practice, not necessarily just in Cranston, but generally. She asked how well the district is communicating with families and are they using programs that are offered already such as offering communication around homework every night. She asked if they have those types of things that are operational, and if they don't, they should. It doesn't always have to be face-to-face contact with families; there are many opportunities to engage families with the schooling through good middle level practices. Mr. Lupino added that there is always the assumption that there is an intact family

there. All too often he sees in the city that parents are not there, and it is a grandparent raising a child. He asked if they make amends for those students who don't have parents. Mr. Scherza responded that this is why it is very important for every child to be known to an individual who can help with those types of things and can intervene. For a lot of students, it hasn't been happening. The advisory will address this situation.

Mr. Flynn, President of the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, stated that he knows the committee has worked very hard and have a lot of difficult decisions to make within the very near future to come forward with some recommendations. He cautioned that some of the recommendations will have fiscal components in order to be accepted. Some will have dramatic changes to contract language. That is all part of the collective bargaining process. Some of the School Committee members would remember the debacle of the Report Card Committee that came forward with what they thought were some wonderful educational recommendations, and for whatever reasons, they were under-minded. There is another layer between the committee recommendations and the implementation they need to engage in. They will both need to get support from both the committee and members of the CTA in order to see this to fruition. The committee has invested a lot of emotion, energy, and time into this committee, and they have done a wonderful job. There are still some very significant decisions that must be made in order to come to conclusions and make recommendations.

2. High School At Cap and Over Cap Class Report

Mr. Scherza distributed a memo from Mr. Nero regarding the classes at Cranston East and Cranston West that are at cap or over cap. Mr. Scherza explained that in comparison to the last set of numbers Mr. Nero gave to the committee, the current numbers are almost in half in many cases. There are still a couple of weeks to go before the students get their report cards and make their decisions to drop down. He felt that the trend was going down as Mr. Nero had predicted to the committee. Mr. Lupino commented that the last report was broken down with the health and physical education classes included. He was assuming that those numbers didn't change. Mr. Scherza responded that the health and physical education numbers may have changed slightly, and Mr. Nero had noted previously that those numbers would not be included in this report. These are academic type classrooms. Mr. Stycos commented that there were two sets of numbers; one set had them in it, and the other did not. Mr. Scherza remarked that administration is not as concerned with the at cap numbers. The at-cap numbers are within limits. As an educator, he would like to see all classes at 18 or 20 students. Realistically, the at cap classes are not the issue; it is the

over cap that brings a concern. The over-cap classes at Cranston East are 19, and at Cranston West they have gone from 52 to 29 over cap. Those numbers will change rapidly once students receive their report cards.

Mr. Stycos asked if Mr. Scherza knew how much of this reduction came from students dropping out of school. Mr. Scherza responded that he didn't know but felt it would be a very small part. The majority of the reduction comes from students going to a lower level. Some are also demittals which are students who signed up for school and did not show up. They include students who moved to other communities, or someone who doesn't belong in this community going back to their home community. Every year the numbers go down between 200 and 300 students from the beginning of the year to June and then in September they are back up again. Just this weekend, they asked another student to leave the district. With regard to dropouts from school, there are very few at this point in the year. He could get actual numbers but doesn't know them now. Mr. Stycos stated that the number will improve because of dropouts, and that is why the number goes down in part every year. Mr. Scherza responded that the vast majority of it goes down because the students drop from advanced placement honors because they are having difficulty into a college prep class. Mr. Stycos indicated that there aren't that many advanced placement and honors classes, so he couldn't see how the dropping down would affect the numbers. Mr. Scherza remarked that there are between 3,800 to 4,000 students

so it doesn't take much to bump their numbers down. Some of the classes that were under-subscribed previously, especially the college prep classes, will start to rise. There was a discussion regarding the over cap and at cap classes.

Page 9

November

15, 2006

Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Scherza if he had any suggestions as to how to lower these over cap and at cap classes. He added that he didn't like having 30 students in a class, and Mr. Scherza noted that the number is still within the acceptable range contractually. Mr. Scherza doesn't like having the classes at 30 either, but the district has a budget gap of over \$1 million. Getting the numbers down short of adding teachers right now, the only way to do it would be to force students into electives they don't want and courses they don't want. There is also a situation where the schedulers at both schools were under the former system, and there was one person who was the keeper. When that goes, everything happens. There are some novice people coming in as well as a new software system they have to learn. There are also some administrative decisions that were made that in retrospect probably could have been made a little better. For example, at Cranston West the decision was made where they would allocate their FTE's within the school. If they wanted 32 instead of 30

English teachers as opposed to 29 versus 27 social studies teachers, they could do that. Some of these were poor projections. Historically, because of the way Cranston has traditionally scheduled at the two high schools, they start so late in the year they don't know how many teachers are really needed until just before school opened. Right now the schedule has been moved up so that they can plan better. It was a factor of making guesses rather than informed and logical decisions. Some of it is their own internal decision making process that they are trying to refine.

Mr. Lupino commented that at Cranston East part of the situation is due to the lack of classrooms because of the construction. Mr. Scherza added that it was not just the loss of classrooms. If they were to add other teachers right now, there is no place to put them because of overcrowding. Cranston West is a different issue because with a few more teachers they can deal with a few of those issues, or if they had made better decisions when they were planning they would have deployed their FTE's a little differently so that some of the classes that over cap would not be. As an example, they could have had another English teacher and one less fine arts teacher. The district has to do a better job planning, and they have to do it earlier. They have to bring the people up to speed, and there must be more cross-training so that no one can hold the district hostage because they are the only keeper of the key.

Mr. Stycos stated that he understood the budget problems this year,

but he hoped that Mr. Scherza would address it in the upcoming budget. He can give the School Committee a cost where they can take it from there as to whether or not they want to do something with it. Mr. Scherza said that he is on record that he was not happy cutting out 15 elementary positions for last year in addition to the high school positions that were cut this year. That was a fiscal decision; it was not an educational decision. As an educator he was somewhat remiss. When the numbers are inserted during budget deliberations, hard decisions will have to be made. On the first go around, there will be

Page 10
15, 2006

November

more teachers in there than there are currently on staff right now. The committee will have to decide how many, if any, can be kept in the budget of new or reinstated positions.

Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Scherza if he felt the problem with the students who don't live in Cranston is under control. He asked if there was anything Mr. Scherza needed in this regard. In the past, an extra truant officer was suggested. Mr. Scherza responded that he would like to have another half-time truant officer, but he would rather have two half time officers rather than one full-time. That was a dollars and cents issue the last time around. There will always be some people

who will slip through the cracks to beat the system. Mr. Lupino stated that this is one of the reasons he doesn't call in to talk radio any longer. Mayor David Ciccilini was on radio awhile back, and it was around the time that Mayor Laffey wanted to arrest the lady from Providence. Mr. Lupino made an interesting point to him, but he was bleeped out on the radio. He never realized they would do that, and he never called again. The point he made was that if Cranston is finding Providence students in this city, they are truant in Providence.

The district does not have a legal responsibility to find truant students that are not in our city. Providence, on the other hand, has a legal responsibility to find students truant; and that is not happening. Cranston is making a concerted effort to do what they need to do, and School Max is now helping; but Providence is not finding them truant.

If they live in Providence and are not going to school there, they are truant. Mr. Scherza commented that the district has not carried on this discussion with the Department of Education nor has he with Dr. Evans, the Superintendent in Providence. They have casually talked, and the question was raised as to whether or not Cranston would be willing to take some of their students. Mr. Scherza told him that he would not enter that discussion seriously until they have talked about the dollars, and the bigger issue under the No Child Left Behind Act and state regulations is that if the district is taking in more at-risk students and the scores go down, the district is penalized for it. There would be no incentive to take them in even if the district was being subsidized. Mr. Lupino asked if the students could take an entrance exam because the students entering Classical High School

do take an exam. Mr. Scherza responded that there were too many pieces involved to go on to a serious discussion. Mr. Traficante added that students with special needs would cost the district even more money. Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Scherza if the district has a real handle on this problem, and Mr. Scherza stated that he didn't feel the district had a handle on the problem; they do have a better handle on it than they did two years ago; they are catching many more in any number of ways. They see multiple siblings with different addresses and multiple registrants from one address. Mr. Lupino mentioned that there was a bomb scare at Cranston East last year, and a company allowed them to borrow an all-system dialer. They found 40 to 50 students with that particular incident who lived out of district. The central registration helps as well as through mailings. Administration has been going to hearings before the Commissioner where people challenge this. People from outside the country have tried to get in as well. There was a general discussion regarding out-of-district students who

have been caught attending Cranston Public Schools. Mr. Lupino noted that the Department of Education put Cranston in a precarious spot by the fact of where the child lives when they allowed wherever the child sleeps determines where the child goes to school and giving up parental rights. There are people who are aware of this fact and

take advantage of it.

Mr. Scherza stated that the district is still in the first quarter. Between June and now, there are approximately 600 new students who registered in Cranston and other students have left as well. Of all of those who are new to this system, administration tries to check them out. With one part-time attendance officer who also has to go to all sessions of truancy court, it is hard to get to these students in a timely fashion. One of the factors is catching up. Because the district is cut so thin it takes time to check out 600 students to see where they live. Mr. Scherza added that he would give the committee an update after grades come out. He expects the numbers to go down a bit more even from where they are now.

3. Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed State of the Cranston Public Schools' Report

Mr. Scherza indicated that the Superintendent's Proposed State of the Cranston Public Schools' Report came about as the result of a resolution which is actually a good idea. It use to be done regularly in the past. Mr. Lupino added that his intent was to do a preview particularly this year because it was an election year. There are new School Committee members, a new Mayor and City Council members.

It is a preview of what might be expected in the budget. Mr. Scherza stated that he knows the resolution did say November. Administration discussed it, and he made the final decision. The

consensus is that it might be more appropriate to do it early in January at the January meeting. The new city administration, city council, state representatives and senators will be invited to hear the issues because they will have to deal with them budgetarily and social policy wise as well. Mr. Lupino stated that this goes against his intent. His intent of the resolution was to give a preview of what Mr. Scherza might be basing his budget on. If it is done in January, the Superintendent will be presenting his budget right after that. This was supposed to give the School Committee a sense of what areas they should be looking at, what areas they needed money in, and what areas were lacking. Mr. Scherza responded that administration is in the process of trying to develop that budget, and for him to give the committee a summary of what is there, they can't give a summary of what doesn't exist yet. Mr. Lupino commented that it is not a projection of the budget. It is a point in time where it is the state as of that date. It is the state of the school department at that particular point in time. It was his intent that the Superintendent present to the committee where they are. What position the district is in as opposed to whether or not they are meeting their projected budget at that point in time in the year and the areas where they will have short falls in the current budget. The January budget is for 07-08. This is a point in time mid year through the 06-07

budget. Mr. Scherza noted that the committee has not had the first budget reconciliation yet; that will be approved on November 20th. It is difficult to do without anything he can rely on. He could make some assumptions, but he doesn't know how much of it would be valid to move forward with. Mr. Traficante commented that the district is still in the same school year. To give the state of the schools in January, the district is still in the same school year. Mr. Scherza can report on the current school year. The committee doesn't present the budget to the Mayor until April 1st, and the Superintendent presents his budget to the committee the end of January. Mr. Scherza added that the state of the schools is more than a budget. It includes program, personnel, mandates coming down from the State, and other changes. All of those things should fold into the report. He certainly wants to do it, and he wants to put something out there that is meaningful, but he also felt it was meaningful for other bodies to hear it because it will have an impact on their deliberations as they go through the budget at the city level. Mr. Votto added it made more sense from his and the other administrators' perspective that the city won't be presenting the state of the city now but rather in January. They will present it to new council members, new general assembly members, and the state of the union will be presented to a new Congress; and it is the administrators' intent to follow that same sequence and give a state of the school department to the new School Committee and other invited guests who are the ones who should have the feed back on it. It would line up with just how the city, state, and federal government

operate. Otherwise, it would be talking to an existing School Committee body when it should go to the new School Committee members. That is where the intent came; they were not trying to delay anything, but it made more sense to follow a sequence every other governing body the school department falls under.

Mr. Lupino stated that having the presentation on Monday, January 8th, conflicts with the City Council. Mr. Lupino commented that he was amenable to hearing the address in January, but he doesn't want it to conflict with the budget situation. The secretary will call the City Clerk to make sure there is no City Council sub-committee meeting on January 8th. If there is, the School Committee meeting will be held on January 9th. He further commented that if it could be worked out, he was comfortable with hearing the State of the Schools' Report in January. Mr. Scherza further stated that it will serve to orient all the elected officials on what the issues are. Hopefully it will guide the deliberations in social policy as well as finance. Mr. Lupino noted that the School Committee never gets to see the wish list from the principals by the time the budget comes out. He indicated that he would be presenting a resolution for the November 20th meeting with regard to asset protection. He feels strongly about asset protection and wants the committee to set a base line on it.

Mr. Stycos asked for a report on the number of students who dropped out of school for the past two or three years as well as the percentage of students. Mr. Votto noted that

this information is contained in the NEASC Reports for both East and West as well as InfoWorks. Mr. Scherza commented that he would obtain this information for the committee.

II. Adjourn Public Work Session

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the work session be adjourned to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation.

There being no further business to come before the work session, it was adjourned to Executive Session at 7:20 p.m.

III. Convene to Executive Session Pursuant to RI State Laws 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation

IV. Executive Session

V. Call to Order – Public Session

Mr. Lupino convened public session at 8:15 p.m.

VI. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – November 15, 2006

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the November 15, 2006 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

VII. Adjourn

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

There be no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony J. Lupino

Clerk

Joint Committee for Middle School Reform
Progress Report to the School Committee
Wednesday, November 15, 2006

- **Principals continue to guide faculty through the reading of Breaking Ranks in the Middle. Discussions of major concepts and the implications for programs and services are being held.**
- **A framework for leadership structures has been developed. Job descriptions for both team leaders and curriculum coordinators have been written in draft form. The next step is to meet with the Central Office Executive Team and the CTA to receive feedback and finalize.**
- **All three middle schools will be ready to implement an advisory program in September 2007. Currently, thirty teachers are enrolled in an advisory course this semester at Bain. A more in-depth graduate level advisory skills course will be held this spring at Western Hills. Teachers from all three schools will be eligible to participate.**
- **Committee members have begun to investigate structural changes and programs representative of the current research and literature**

about effective middle schools. Alternative scheduling models which maximize instructional time are currently being considered. The Committee expects to have a recommendation to the Executive Committee and the CTA by the end of December.

- The Committee will provide final recommendations on leadership, organization for learning structures and personalization with accompanying budget to the Superintendent by December 31, 2006.**

- The Committee will have accomplished its charge as of December 31, 2006, and therefore be disbanded. Once initial recommendations are adopted and ready for implementation, a second more representative committee will need to be formed to review curriculum, instruction and assessment as they align with research, best practice and organizational structures.**